

RNC RESEARCH DIVISION  
MARCH 23, 1971

MUSKIE ON VIETNAM

ADDENDUM

POW Raid

"The world looks to the United States, not for sporadic demonstrations of military might and individual bravery, but for steady, firm and resolute demonstrations of the capacity to lead, to act with sound judgement, and to make a contribution to an early settlement of the war in Indochina.

"That...is our real challenge and should be our prime objective. In my judgement, the incident which was described to us yesterday, was inconsistent with that objective."

Muskie Press Release  
November 24, 1970

"Let me conclude by saying that if we are going to respond to all our frustrations about the war and our inability to bring it to a final conclusion by encouraging such military efforts as this one, whenever we can devise a military effort which would have some potential to reach into North Vietnam to rescue a handful of prisoners then all we are doing is embarking on a military course that could escalate the whole war."

Congressional Record  
November 24, 1970

"I'm very much disturbed by that effort and by the bombing raids of the weekend.

"It's important, of course, that they (the prisoners' families) understand we care, but what is really involved in this kind of an effort is whether or not the risks which it generates are worth this type of symbolic gesture, more than that, whether or not this kind of a risk...this kind of a military intrusion into North Vietnam, advances the cause of bringing these prisoners home, and I think what we've done this past weekend is to risk escalating this war once more, and that runs counter to the objective of bringing these prisoners of war back home...

"I think the only way to bring American boys home, prisoners, 300,000 still fighting there, is to end the war...

"I think these kinds of ventures, indeed minimize the prospects of a negotiated settlement, which is the real way to end this war."

Transcript  
Dick Cavett Show  
November 25, 1970

MUSKIE - VIETNAM  
PAGE 2

Vietnam - Troop Withdrawals

Speaking in Los Angeles, Muskie said:

"I've advocated for a long time, almost a year now, the setting of a definite date for withdrawals. Almost immediately we would begin to reap the benefits of the withdrawal itself because we would have made the commitment."

Portland Press Herald  
January 26, 1971

"I have urged that the United States set a deadline for the withdrawal of all our forces from Vietnam. There is reason to believe that such a deadline could provide the basis for a negotiated settlement between North and South Vietnam. There is little doubt that it could quickly lead to an agreement for the release of Americans held prisoners-of-war and for the safe withdrawal of all our men."

Speech, California Democrat State  
Convention  
Sacramento, California  
January 23, 1971

Appearing on the Merv Griffin Show Muskie said:

"I think we need to set a date for withdrawal....

"Our allies in Saigon then know by that date they must be ready for whatever the situation is. And if there's any advantage to them to working out a settlement with us, they've only got until that time to work it out. After that it's conceivable that the war would continue with the South Vietnamese. V

"I think that this would create the best possibility of stimulating both the South Vietnamese and Hanoi to work out an agreement, especially on two key points, one of which...(is) bringing our own prisoners of war back....

"And, in addition, it seems to me that there would be a possibility - none that you could guarantee - that both sides would decide, well, let's work out a political settlement within that time frame."

Transcript  
Merv Griffin Show  
January 26, 1971

During a speech for Joseph Duffey in Hartford and later with newsmen, Senator Muskie made the following comments:

"It is right to withdraw our combat forces from South Vietnam as we are

MUSKIE - VIETNAM  
PAGE 3

doing. It's wrong to increase the level of military activities in Cambodia and over the skies of North Vietnam as we are also doing. Is this the plan we were promised more than 24 months ago?

"I believe we must commit ourselves firmly to the complete withdrawal of our forces from Indochina by a fixed and definite date. This much is certain: the only light at the end of the tunnel will be the one we strike ourselves. And if this administration does not have the courage to strike that light, then a new coalition will."

Hartford Courant  
February 1, 1971

"We have tried in the Congress to limit America's involvement in Cambodia. If the letter of the Cooper-Church amendment is not clear enough to preserve that limit, then I believe we must make it clear."

Providence Journal  
February 1, 1971

Laos - News Blackout

Muskie said that the administration is "undermining its potential support in the Senate" by failing to advise Congress of its operations in Southeast Asia.

Muskie said of the new operation in Cambodia and Laos - "On its face, it is an escalation of military activity. It involves a scale of military activity that we have not seen for some time. It is to me a widening of the war in that sense."

Muskie said that the fact the Secretary of State did not mention the Cambodia operation in recent hearings "intensifies the doubts that the administration intends to take the Congress into its confidence."

Portland Press Herald  
February 4, 1971

Laos

Speaking in New York City, Muskie said that any South Vietnamese attack into Laos with U.S. support would be "another false step in Indochina."

"I would oppose a decision to unleash and support a South Vietnamese attack into Laos. It would be another false step in Indochina; another example of the administration's shortsighted policies there...In the long run, the administration's policy does not protect our troops; it endangers them. The only way to bring this tragedy to an end is through negotiation."

Washington Post  
February 7, 1971

"We must remember that saving men's lives is more important than saving face for governments. We must remember that a foreign policy which cannot be presented honestly to the American people does not deserve their support..."

"I am deeply concerned by the news blackout before the invasion of Laos, and the conflicting reports of what is happening there now. Eventually, we will know, and the Administration will learn that it can embargo the news, but it cannot embargo the truth..."

"I believe it was wrong to unleash South Vietnamese troops across the border of Laos and support them there...What we have attempted, with a limited number of South Vietnamese, is an operation that has been rejected in the past for far stronger U.S. forces. Once again, this Administration has minimized the risks and exaggerated the benefits of a new military adventure. Whatever the apparent or illusory short-term military gains, this action has resulted in a substantial extension of our military involvement and has further undermined the Paris talks..."

"Many Americans believe that events have taken over, that things have gotten out of hand, that nothing they can do will change the policy of this Administration. But I believe you can make a difference, even before 1972..."

"That is why I introduced a sense of the Senate Resolution last May, calling on the President to establish a timetable for the complete and orderly withdrawal of all American troops. That is why I co-sponsored the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment in the last Congress. And that is why I have agreed to co-sponsor it in this Congress, and to support its establishment of a deadline of December 31, 1971."

Speech, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
February 23, 1971  
(emphasis added)

#### Vietnam - Style

Addressing a group of college professors and journalists in Cambridge last April, Muskie was asked why he did not speak out on Vietnam more often. Muskie replied:

"I don't think people care much about Vietnam. Elections are decided on personalities, not issues."

New York Times Magazine  
November 22, 1970

OCTOBER 4, 1971

SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIEVIETNAM - UPDATEMARCH - SEPTEMBER, 1971General

Appearing on the David Frost Show Muskie said he regrets now that he did not make public as far back as 1965 his "real doubts about our involvement" in Vietnam.

"There are two ways, and they're both legitimate ways, of trying to influence public policy. And I guess the tendency is, when the President is a member of your own party, and you're a Senator, to try to express your doubts directly to him, in order to give him a chance to get the benefit of your own views."

New York Times

March 31, 1971

Note: Muskie is on the record as having expressed these doubts privately to LBJ in a letter in January 1968. However, based on the number of public expressions of support of the Johnson policy 1965-1968, the existence of these "real doubts" is itself in real doubt.

"Our involvement in this war has been wrong, morally wrong...I refuse to be self-righteous about this because I was wrong."

Portsmouth Herald

April 19, 1971

"We have done as much for the South Vietnamese government as anyone could reasonably have asked of us. It is not unreasonable now to ask that government to test its own ability to survive. W ]

"We can use the date we set for our withdrawal to negotiate matters which are of importance to us. We are getting nothing now from the other side in return for the withdrawals we are making.

"We can, and must use this date to negotiate the prompt release of our prisoners. It is the only way to bring them home.

"We must use this date to negotiate the safe withdrawal of our troops. There is no other way to insure their safety.

OCTOBER 4, 1971

General Continued

"We must set a date to make real negotiations possible. Only negotiations can bring an early end to all the fighting.

"As Senator Humphrey said at the outset, we are not speaking about Johnson's war...or Nixon's war. This tragedy is the responsibility of every public official who allowed it to happen.

"Whatever you or I or any of us now think about the war, I believe we all agree on one terrible price it is making us pay. It is the price of division, fear and hatred in America. We must not go on like this."

Remarks --

"Indochina: Another View"

ABC Television

April 22, 1971

"The American people are willing to accept their responsibilities to other people in the world, but they do not believe that what we have been doing in Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos is a proper exercise of world responsibility."

Speech -- Indianapolis, Indiana

April 23, 1971

"Our purpose must not be to create an issue next year but to end the killing now...it is more important than politics. It is worth fighting for in 1971 and it is even worth losing for in 1972."

Speech -- Milwaukee, Wisconsin

AP

May 15, 1971

Bombing

"Our obsession with the body count method of measuring the progress of the war has led us to the indiscriminate bombing of the countryside and the wasteful destruction of its people and resources."

Congressional Record

March 30, 1971

"Now with respect to the overall justification of the bombing, I think I would agree with an increasing number of Americans that they were not justified, that we should not have embarked upon them in the first place."

Meeting -- with Congressional

Summer interns

July 21, 1971

OCTOBER 4, 1971

Fixed Withdrawal Date

"Surely, it must be apparent that we must make the decision that our involvement must end and end totally. It would be better from a logistical point of view and a tactical point of view if that decision were made by the Commander-in-Chief. He's in a better position if he willed it to arrange an orderly withdrawal.

"But whether or not it is made by the President, it must be made...

"What are the benefits of such a commitment? If we are to make such a commitment, immediately our own people would know that an end to this involvement is in sight and that we can begin the healing process which we must have if we are to unite our country and that we can begin the reallocation of resources we must have to deal with our problems here at home.

"...our friends around the globe, the nations of the free world, would breathe a collective sigh of relief that at long last their great friend and ally is willing and has decided to cut himself off from this involvement and that our credibility of exercising our influence in other trouble spots in the world -- the Middle East and elsewhere -- was accordingly enhanced."

Speech -- Democratic State  
Chairmen's Association  
Washington, D.C.  
March 26, 1971

"President Nixon and Vice President Agnew tell us that they fear a 'right wing reaction,' and a 'nightmare of recrimination,' if we set a fixed date for withdrawal from the war...

"What we need from the White House is not more rhetoric about right-wing reactions, but straight talk about America's interests and America's purposes. Whatever the ad-man's estimate of the American public, we can bear to hear the truth...

"I do not believe this Administration will move us quickly and surely along this path (to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam)."

"I do not believe the Nixon White House priorities or the Agnew Vice Presidential bombast offer hope of uniting our people to heal the war's wounds and to accomplish the works of peace."

Remarks --  
"Dump Nixon Rally"  
Providence, Rhode Island  
April 18, 1971

OCTOBER 4, 1971

Fixed Withdrawal Date Continued

Muskie was asked if his definition of total withdrawal included Air Force, supplies, and logistics. He replied that "supply and money may have to continue for a longer time."

After the session, when asked whether he meant that America should continue to supply the South Vietnamese government with arms after American forces leave, Muskie said that this was a "transitional problem very difficult to decide without military advice and guidance" and that it was impossible for a senator to "establish policy on all these tactical problems."

Cleveland Plain Dealer

April 18, 1971

"I want the President to succeed in his announced purpose to get our men out of Vietnam. I intend to do everything I can to make him succeed faster than he thinks necessary and on a larger scale than he thinks possible. Our job as Democrats is to push and prod at every turn to help the President put an end to this tragedy, and to put an end to it this year."

Speech -- Indianapolis, Indiana

April 23, 1971

Laos

Muskie said that while the Administration spoke "nothing but optimism" about the operation in Laos, reports from the field indicated that the South Vietnamese did not control the Ho Chi Minh Trail "long enough to disrupt the flow of supplies" and had suffered such severe casualties that the operation was "nothing less than a serious military defeat."

Washington Post

March 27, 1971

"I just think it (the Laos Operation) raises the risk of widening the war. It raises the risk, I think, of Chinese intervention; although there's very little evidence, some evidence, but not conclusive evidence, about how they are reacting to it."

David Frost Show

March 31, 1971

Peace Proposals

Muskie called the Viet Cong peace proposals the best offer yet to end the war.



OCTOBER 4, 1971

Peace Proposals continued

"This initiative may make it possible to follow through on what I would have proposed were I in the White House."

Muskie went on to say that he would have proposed: (1) To set a date for total withdrawal, (2) Condition this withdrawal on the release of prisoners, and (3) Arrange a cease-fire for the safety of departing troops.

Speech -- Dallas, Texas

AP

July 2, 1971

"...whatever objectionable elements may be contained in this latest proposal, we should be greatly heartened by this apparent pledge by the other side..."

Congressional Record

July 14, 1971

POW's

"When he (President Nixon) says he's going to keep troops there until we get our prisoners, it seems to me he has not set a policy for getting our prisoners. I can't recall a war in which prisoners have been exchanged before the war was settled." Muskie said the President's policy "is likely to delay our withdrawal without getting out prisoners back."

Washington Post

May 1, 1971

South Vietnamese Elections

In 1967, Muskie was an election observer in Vietnam. When he returned home, he noted:

"The election was a meaningful step on the road toward democracy and stability in Vietnam."

"We found no evidence suggesting widespread fraud or irregularity and, to my knowledge, none has been reported by the other foreign observers or the 600 newsmen who watched the elections."

"The fact that more than 80% of the eligible voters cast ballots is a favorable sign..."

OCTOBER 4, 1971

South Vietnamese Elections  
Continued

"I believe the voter turnout indicates a desire in the people to develop a government which is responsive to their needs. The opportunity has been created for them to respond and they have done so."

Muskie then responded to several criticisms of the September 3 elections levelled "by some of the presidential candidates and critics of America." He defended the South Vietnamese against charges of undue government pressure and press censorship.

Muskie Newsletter  
October 6, 1967

Now Muskie is saying:

Muskie gave an ambiguous reply to a questionnaire concerning what his attitude would be towards the South Vietnamese government after the October elections.

The new Democratic Coalition of Rhode Island reported that Muskie said he would give aid regardless of who won, but that the level of aid would depend on a number of factors. These include the "integrity and representative nature" of the government and its "willingness to seek a peaceful settlement of its differences with North Vietnam."

Providence Journal  
July 19, 1971

Muskie called the South Vietnamese government "so undemocratic that the choice in this presidential election has apparently been made before the ballots are cast or counted." He added that the Vietnamese people "are allowed no choice."

AP  
August 26, 1971

"We are told that we must keep fighting a war in Indochina to give South Vietnam a reasonable chance for survival." Muskie added that our support for the present regime does not allow any real choice to the Vietnamese people.

Portland Press Herald  
August 27, 1971

OCTOBER 4, 1971

"Now is the time to admit that in Indochina our cause has been a mistake -- that too many people have died to defend a democracy so undemocratic that the choice in the coming election (in Vietnam) has been made before the ballots are counted or even cast."

Fund raising dinner --  
Beverly Hills, California

UPI

September 8, 1971

Vietnamization

"The credibility of Vietnamization has been diluted and cast into doubt by the performance of South Vietnamese forces."

Baltimore Sun

March 27, 1971